

740
Photocopy
REMARKS
ON A
CHARGE

4109. h. 12.
1-12,

DELIVERED TO THE CLERGY OF HIS
DIOCESE.

BY THE LORD BISHOP OF LINCOLN,
AT THE VISITATION IN MAY AND JUNE,

M.DCC.XCIV.

IN A LETTER ADDRESSED TO HIS
LORDSHIP.

THE SHEPHERD SAYS, "THEY MAY TALK OF
BOOK LEARNING WHAT THEY WILL, BUT FOR
HIS PART HE NEVER SAW MORE UNFEATLIE
FELLOWS THAN GREAT CLERKS WERE."

SIR PHILIP SIDNEY'S ARCADIA, BOOK II.

L O N D O N:

PRINTED FOR J. JOHNSON,
ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD.

M.DCC.XCV.



REMARKS, &c.

MY LORD,

IN passing through a part of the diocese of Lincoln during the last summer, I learned that your lordship had delivered a charge, which was received by your clergy, and by several of the members of the established church, with marks of approbation. I, therefore, concluded that it would be published; and, from the attention which your lordship is known to have given to mathematical investigations, I expected to have found it distinguished for closeness of argument, and acuteness of remark. But how great is my disappointment on finding it to be a production that betrays both original poverty of genius, and a wretched inconclusiveness of argument. An ignorance too must be imputed to your lordship, disgraceful to your character as a theologian, advanced to the episcopal chair: more especially

A 2

since

since you have come forward as the censurer of opinions, to which it would have been better for your lordship to have given a closer attention.

Your first seven or eight pages are taken up with the most futile remarks; remarks, that will apply as well to one form of government as another; and they resemble the first efforts of a juvenile mind, rather than display the profound judgment of the able and experienced scholar. You have advanced in them nothing but pompous inanity and inapplicable generalities; and the quotations you have introduced, might have been chosen with equal propriety and force by the opposer, as by the abettor, of your opinions. You have gravely quoted Aristotle to strengthen your assertion, that men cannot continue united "without the establishment of *some species* of political power;" and adduced bishop Warburton, with a solemn parade, to shew us the necessity of religion to the well-being of society; but adduced in a manner not unfavourable to the atheist, who would consider the quotations from Warburton and Cicero, as unfolding what he would call the mysteries of priestcraft. But genuine religion calls for no such miserable supporters as your lordship:

Non tali auxilio, nec defensoribus istis
Tempus eget.

After

After this ridiculous attempt at argument, (made nobody knows against whom, certainly not against those whom you afterwards denominate the disciples of Socinus, because it contains nothing to which they would not assent) your lordship says, " We might reasonably have expected, that the cruelties and sufferings experienced in France, would have excited universal detestation and terror." Now that they did so, and were more feelingly lamented by those who wished for the establishment of the republic, than by their adversaries, no impartial man can seriously doubt; and surely we might, with as much reason, have expected that the conduct of the allies would have excited detestation and terror equally universal; and been as feelingly lamented by those who profess themselves the ministers of the gospel of peace, and who assume a spiritual authority in what they call the establishment of it, notwithstanding that such authority is irreconcilable with its spirit, and in direct opposition to the injunction of its founder: *Call no man your master upon the earth, for one is your master, even Christ, and all YE ARE BRETHREN.* But alas! it is the subversion of this *spiritual authority*, to call it by no harsher term, that has excited so general an alarm. And yet nothing can be more disgusting than to hear the prelates of the English church rant out their lamentation of the downfall of what
they

they now chuse to denominate the christian religion, in France; when that very bishop whom your lordship quotes, as well as bishop Hurd, laboured earnestly, but ineffectually*, to prove the church of Rome to be, exclusively of all other churches, the antichristian power. What! can the possession of ecclesiastical benefices; can the celebration of the mass, with the idolatrous worship of Mary, of saints, and of angels; can a frail transgressing mortal's impious assumption of an authority to forgive sins, and to communicate the gifts of the holy spirit; can all the fooleries and the knaveries of priests, with those lying wonders with which they have deceived the world, be called christianity? If they can, it is no wonder that it should have been overthrown; the wonder is that the overthrow should be lamented.

But to come still nearer. By a trick of logical legerdemain, very common with ecclesiastics, your lordship has made religion and the established church, convertible terms. In this particular, however, you are the less to be excused; for you were within the reach of better information. Mrs. Pretyman was once a dissenter, and did not, I dare say, consider herself at that time;

as

* See Evanston's Letter to bishop Hurd.

as destitute of religion, although she was not a member of the established church. By her, therefore, my lord, had you deigned to have consulted her, your ideas on this head might have been rectified. You tell us, however, that "not only the tenets and discipline of the established church have been attacked with indecent asperity, but all the leading doctrines of the gospel have been called in question. The divinity and atonement of our saviour, the personality and operation of the holy spirit, the inspiration of the holy scriptures, and the expediency of public worship, have been seriously denied." It is undoubtedly true that they have so, but without "weakening the ties of civil and religious obligations;" and it still remains with your lordship to *prove* that they are the leading doctrines of the gospel. If they are, christianity rests upon a weak foundation, and you may well be alarmed and tremble for the fate of the gospel, if you really believe the equality of Christ, and of the holy spirit, with the one almighty creator of the universe.

As a prelate of the English church, you must faithfully believe that the creed ascribed to Athanasius, and all the thirty-nine articles in their literal and grammatical sense, are consonant with
the

the word of God, or else be a profligate and daring hypocrite, trifling with God and man. Now that blaspheming creed asserts, that a man cannot be saved without he faithfully believes, not only that the Father is God, the son is God, and the holy ghost is God, but that each person is by himself God and lord. Here, most reverend and believing prelate! pause and reflect a moment. If each person be God and lord by himself, he must be so independantly of the other two; that is, the Father must be God and lord by himself, without the son and holy ghost: the son must be God and lord by himself, without the Father and the holy ghost; and the holy ghost must be God and lord by himself, without the Father and the son. The irrefragable conclusion from all this is, that there are three Gods and three lords, contrary to scripture, and even to the other parts of the creed. No conclusion in Euclid can be deduced, with greater logical precision, and, however you may in words deny it, the church acts upon it in what you call her "admirable liturgy;" for she addresses each person separately, supposing that each of them separately can grant the petition preferred.

As to the word atonement, it is no where to be found in scripture as applicable to Christ, except in the eleventh verse of the fifth chapter of the epistle to the Romans, where the greek word is *καταλλαγή*,
which

which your lordship knows, at least *ought* to know, conveys no idea of an expiatory sacrifice, but that of a reconciliation; which reconciliation flowed from the unbounded benevolence of God, and was received by mankind through the instrumentality of Christ Jesus. Besides, if the son and the holy ghost are each of them God, equal to the Father, there would be an equal necessity for an atonement to be offered to each; or, is the son more benevolent than the Father, that he should voluntarily offer up this expiatory sacrifice to appease *his own* justice, the justice of the Father, and the justice of the holy ghost?

If these are really "the valuable and discriminating sanctions of christianity," why has not your lordship pointed out the passages in which they are *fully* declared to be so? When Peter preached his first sermon after the descent of the spirit, on the day of Pentecost, by which many were converted, he conveyed no other idea of Jesus, than that of his being a man approved of God, or rather proved to be from God, by miracles and signs which God did by him; and that his resurrection was effected, not by virtue of his own superior nature, but by the power of God. "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses, therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, &c." Here is a manifest absurdity upon the hypothesis that

Christ is God. For how could God be exalted? He, who must necessarily possess all possible power, wisdom and goodness, could receive no accession of greatness or of happiness. As to the interpretation given to those passages in which Jesus expressly and unequivocally declares his inability to do any thing of himself, it would shock every sober and reflecting mind, were not mankind taught from their infancy to make a surrender of their reason to the dogmas and absurdities of orthodox priests. But it is a surrender which they have no right to require. They have no delegated commission from heaven; and, therefore, can produce no authority for preferring their own glosses to the pure word of God. That Jesus should be guilty of a mental reservation, and speak of his human nature only, if he possessed any other, when he makes use of the personal pronouns, I, me, &c. is so evidently shocking, that nothing but the most warped mind could, for a moment, acquiesce in it. It is totally unworthy of him, who was without guile, and in whose mouth was no deceit. That Christ should say, I can of *mine own self* do nothing; yet should mean, that by my human nature I can do nothing, but by my divine nature I can do every thing, is as repugnant to scripture, as it is to common sense and to common honesty. Besides every prayer that Jesus offers, stamps
 absurdity

absurdity upon the doctrine of his divinity. Did one nature of Jesus pray to the other nature, and was Jesus the object of his own devotion?

Again. "And this, says Jesus, is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." But with what truth could Jesus have called his Father the only true God, if he himself was God equal with the Father?

Again. And Jesus answered him, "The first of all the commandments is. (Mark xii. 29) Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, is one lord." The apostle says, "We know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one, for though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many and lords many,) but to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him." And what can be more decisive than the declaration of the apostle, in the 15th chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians? "When all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all." Language can have no meaning if the doctrine

of there being but one person in the godhead, be not the doctrine of the scriptures. To this I know that it may be opposed, that in the thirtieth verse of the tenth chapter of John's gospel, our master saith, "I and the Father are one." But one what? Not God: for if so, we must say that his disciples, and all christians make one God; for the same language is held in the seventeenth chapter of this gospel. According to the twenty-first and twenty-second verses, Jesus says, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their name, that they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou *gavest* me, I have *given them*, that they may be one, even as we are one." You see, therefore, that the same unity which prevails between God and Jesus, prevails between God, and Jesus, and his followers. If the former proves Jesus equal with God, this must prove his followers to be so. But this is evidently absurd; consequently it means that there is an unity of design; that they are all one in the work of the christian religion, and of promoting the salvation of men. In this sense, though an human being only, Jesus might certainly say, with the strictest propriety, "I and the Father are one." For in him dwelt all the fullness of the godhead bodily.

I am

I am glad, my lord, of this opportunity of shewing the utility of comparing scripture with scripture; and thereby ascertaining the real sense; as I cannot but be persuaded, that if it were but duly attended to, it would shew that the scripture-doctrine concerning Jesus, is that of his being a mere man, commissioned indeed by almighty God, whose instrument he is incönducting his brethren to eternal happiness. For when once it appears, as it then would, that coming forth from the Father, sent from God, being commissioned from heaven, son of God, and phraseology similar to this was familiar with the Jews, and applied by them to men, all ideas of Christ's having any existence before his appearance upon earth, would be clearly perceived to be ill founded: and consequently christianity would recover it's purity in that fundamental doctrine of there being only one person, the Father, who is God, and who alone is to be worshipped.

Your doctrines, my lord, are not more abhorrent from reason, than they are contrary to a liberal construction of scripture. I use the expression *liberal construction*, because it is one which your own church has seen the propriety of, in her controversies with the church of Rome. Whenever the divines of that church have brought forward the words, "This is my body;" "This
is

of there being but one person in the godhead, be not the doctrine of the scriptures. To this I know that it may be opposed, that in the thirtieth verse of the tenth chapter of John's gospel, our master saith, "I and the Father are one." But one what? Not God: for if so, we must say that his disciples, and all christians make one God; for the same language is held in the seventeenth chapter of this gospel. According to the twenty-first and twenty-second verses, Jesus says, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their name, that they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou *gavest* me, I have *given them*, that they may be one, even as we are one." You see, therefore, that the same unity which prevails between God and Jesus, prevails between God, and Jesus, and his followers. If the former proves Jesus equal with God, this must prove his followers to be so. But this is evidently absurd; consequently it means that there is an unity of design; that they are all one in the work of the christian religion, and of promoting the salvation of men. In this sense, though an human being only, Jesus might certainly say, with the strictest propriety, "I and the Father are one." For in him dwelt all the fullness of the godhead bodily.

I am

I am glad, my lord, of this opportunity of shewing the utility of comparing scripture with scripture; and thereby ascertaining the real sense; as I cannot but be persuaded, that if it were but duly attended to, it would shew that the scripture-doctrine concerning Jesus, is that of his being a mere man, commissioned indeed by almighty God, whose instrument he is in conducting his brethren to eternal happiness. For when once it appears, as it then would, that coming forth from the Father, sent from God, being commissioned from heaven, son of God, and phraseology similar to this was familiar with the Jews, and applied by them to men, all ideas of Christ's having any existence before his appearance upon earth, would be clearly perceived to be ill founded: and consequently christianity would recover its purity in that fundamental doctrine of there being only one person, the Father, who is God, and who alone is to be worshipped.

Your doctrines, my lord, are not more abhorrent from reason, than they are contrary to a liberal construction of scripture. I use the expression *liberal construction*, because it is one which your own church has seen the propriety of, in her controversies with the church of Rome. Whenever the divines of that church have brought forward the words, "This is my body;" "This
is

is my blood ;” “ whoſo eateth my fleſh, and drinketh my blood” &c. in favour of tranſubſtantiation, thoſe of your own communion have always proteſted againſt their being underſtood in the literal ſenſe, and have, with the ſtricteſt propriety and fairneſs, urged the neceſſity of admitting a more liberal conſtruction. So that, my lord, the oppugners of the doctrine of the trinity, and of atonement by the blood of Chriſt, are only combating you on your own ground, and with your own weapons.

You will not ſurely deny, that the unſcriptural expreſſions of your “ admirable liturgy” were totally unknown in the primitive ages of the goſpel. The word trinity, was never uſed till long after the apoſtolic age; the Nicene creed was a fabrication of the fourth century, and that aſcribed to Athanaſius did not appear till long after. The firſt followers of Jeſus conducted their worſhip without this unintelligible jargon, derived from the crude and metaphyſical notions of the ſchools. And yet there never was a purer and more exalted devotion, nor was the conduct of chriſtians ever more conſonant with the purity of the goſpel, than in the three firſt centuries of it's promulgation: during the greater part of which time, it was a deſpiſed and perſecuted hereſy, and, what
unitarianiſm

unitarianism now is, in direct opposition to the established religion.

Since, my lord, you have so dictatorially asserted that "the divinity and atonement of our saviour," and "the personality and operation of the holy spirit," are the leading doctrines of the gospel, you must not think me unreasonable in making an enquiry into the grounds, and with what qualifications, you have discovered them so to be. Have you paid strict attention to the hebrew idiom; and are you perfectly familiar with Jewish ideas? Have you really compared scripture with scripture, and attended, with the same impartiality, to the evidences for the unitarian as the trinitarian sentiments? Have you searched into the various manuscripts, and studied the quotations of the fathers, in order to ascertain the genuine readings of the new testament; and have you consulted the earliest versions of those sacred books? Can you shew the weakness of the arguments, by which Porson has demonstrated the spuriousness of the text relating to the three witnesses? And are you really master of every thing material, that has been urged by those whom you denominate the disciples of Socinus? If not, you are an incompetent judge. If you can answer in the affirmative, it would have been more honourable to yourself, and might have proved

proved more serviceable to your cause, if you had favoured us with argument, instead of dogmatical assertion.

There is, however, one expression in your charge, which affords ample testimony of your entire ignorance of those opinions, upon which you would evidently bring an odium. My acquaintance, my lord, is tolerably extensive amongst those who deny the death of Jesus to have been an expiatory sacrifice; and yet I know none who “presumptuously lay claim to eternal happiness upon the ground of their own merit.” They are convinced that neither Jesus, themselves, nor any created being can have merit, strictly so called. They cheerfully ascribe it to the benevolence of the universal parent, that the doctrine of life and immortality has been brought to light. Whilst they contemplate the character of Jesus, with esteem and reverence, and see in it whatsoever things are “lovely, and of good report,” they are firmly persuaded that the highest gratitude, adoration, and praise is due to the great being, by whom he was commissioned. They can say with the apostle, “Blessed be the God and Father of our lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” Nor is it any degradation to the character of Jesus, to be the instrument

ment of the almighty in revealing his will to man.

Either the appellation, "the disciples of Socinus" is meant to convey the idea that the doctrines of the unity of person in the godhead, and the humanity of Jesus, cannot be traced to any higher antiquity than the time of the reformation, which your lordship knows, or *ought* to know, is contrary both to scripture and to church history; or else it was improper to use it at all, since the unitarians of the present day differ widely from the sentiments of that eminent reformer; especially in that of the necessity of worshipping Christ, although he considered him as a creature.

Whether the attention which your lordship has given to abstract quantity, has rendered you incapable of attending to the nature of the human mind, is not for me to determine. This, however, is undoubtedly obvious, that there is no necessary connexion between unitarianism and republicanism; and I am sure that your lordship is guilty of a misrepresentation, when you say, that they who are believers in the mere humanity of Christ, are "amongst the most zealous abettors of republican principles." I am sorry to say, that this looks a little like artifice, in endeavouring to palm
upon

upon those men, whom the defenders of your church have not been able to confute, political opinions, which, at this time of day, would render them odious, since the abettors of republican principles, are unfairly supposed to approve of all that has been transacted in France. To my knowledge there are several, who are sincere in their disbelief of the trinity, and convinced that Christ had no nature superior to the human, who yet consider the English constitution, if it were restored to it's purity, as that which would most promote the welfare of this country. But, my lord, I should be glad if you would inform us, whether the speculative opinion, that a republican form of government would be most promotive of the happiness of man, be either treasonable or seditious ; whether it be " inimical to the peace of society, or subversive of all religion ?"

They who are known for their opposition to those opinions, which your lordship has erroneously asserted to be the leading doctrines of the gospel, are indeed " men of cultivated minds, and of general decency of character," and you might have added, with truth of far the greater part of them, that they are eminently moral. But it requires something more than the *αὐλος ἑρα* of a Pretyman, to prove that they are led astray by a
vain

vain philosophy, or that “ under the allowed freedom of discussion,” they have “ propagated opinions inimical to the peace of society, or subversive of all religion.” To believe in one almighty parent of the universe, under whose moral government we are; to believe that he has revealed his will to mankind by his servants the prophets, and raised us to the hope of eternal life by the gospel, and that he has appointed a day in which he will judge the world, by that man whom he has ordained, cannot be subversive of all religion. To believe that our happiness or misery in a future state depends upon our conduct here, cannot be inimical to the peace of society. To believe that we must deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, that we must recompence to no man evil for evil; but as much as lieth in us to live peaceably with all men, cannot be inimical to the peace of society. And, therefore, what you say of “ the most improved understandings, if they do not act under the salutary guidance of a religious principle, becoming a curse, instead of a blessing,” will not apply to those whom your lordship calls the disciples of Socinus; since, in despite of any thing you can prove to the contrary, they are not “ without the directing influence of a sound faith,” and are willing to subscribe to the truth of the assertion you have quoted from lord Bacon; namely, that “ there was never found in any age of the world,
either

either philosophy, or sect, or religion, which did so highly exalt the public good, as the christian faith."

With those deistical works, to which you ascribe the disorders of France, the unitarians have nothing to do. They have neither "weakened the authority of revelation, ridiculed the idea of a moral governor of the world or of responsibility in a future state." On the contrary, there have been no men, in proportion to their numbers, who have more zealously exerted themselves in bringing forward the evidences for the truth of the christian religion, or, who have more unweariedly insisted upon the doctrines of righteousness, temperance, and a judgment to come. Amidst all the vicissitudes of life, the great principles of the gospel are the grounds of their consolation and hope. There are no men to whom the glad tidings of eternal life, are more desirable, or who look forward with more steadfastness and joy to that period, when this mortal shall be exchanged for immortality. But it is not unworthy of your lordship's consideration, whether those tenets which are held in common by the English and Romish churches, have not proved a more fruitful source of deism and total unbelief, than any other cause whatever. When men perceive the absurdities that flow from the doctrines of the trinity, and of an expiatory sacrifice by the blood

(a red

(a red fluid) of Christ ; when they see that they who presume to be the authorised teachers of the christian faith, give in to the vices and follies of the world, attached to its amusements, pleasures, honours and riches, and zealous to advance their worldly interests ; when they see a set of men, under the denomination of the clergy, assuming a dominion over the faith and consciences of their fellow mortals, or what amounts to the same thing, directing their censures against those who conscientiously dissent from them ; when they see these things, which from their infancy they have been taught to consider as the christian religion, it is no wonder that they should look upon it as priestcraft. Deism is a thousand times preferable to such christianity. Though it be allowed that “ the gospel tends, in the highest degree, to promote the peace and welfare of the community,” yet no sanction is given to any ecclesiastical establishment. Christ’s kingdom is not of this world : christianity stands upon its own basis, and wants not the support of any human power. Whoever is not convinced by the arguments that are adduced in its support, will never be convinced from the mere consideration of its being established, but rather be the more confirmed in his unbelief, whatever hypocritical pretensions he may make, to avoid the odium, in which the open avowal of his opinions might

might involve him. And unless he be convinced, it will never operate as a rule of life. But where it is received from a full persuasion of its truth, it will be thought worthy of all acceptance, and influence the conduct of its genuine professors. So that where it is received as the word of God, no establishment of it is wanted; and where it is not received as the word of God, the establishment of it can only make men hypocrites.

It is not at all extraordinary, my lord, that they who have habituated themselves to severe enquiry, and exercised their understanding in the detection of religious errors, should be equally able to discern and expose absurdities in politics. This is the only way that leads to improvement. It was the method by which the constitution of this country became superior to that of Spain, of Portugal, or of Turkey. It is, therefore, likely that they who differ very widely from the doctrines and discipline of the established church, may also be able to propose amendments in the constitution of their country. But surely for this, they are entitled to the gratitude of their fellow citizens, and not to be held up by bigoted and interested prelates, as “licentious innovators, or discontented and factious spirits.”

But

But after all, my lord, your own attachment to the tenets and discipline of the church of England does not appear to be either disinterested, or formed upon a profound acquaintance with theological learning. You are in possession of one of its highest dignities, and share in some of its largest emoluments, uniting the deanery of St. Paul's with the bishopric of Lincoln; whilst many of your brethren, whose pious labours infinitely exceed your's, and are far more useful, are in want of the common decencies requisite for their station. You have been able to aggrandize your family, and raise them to *otium cum dignitate*. Nor am I insensible that when I mention this, I am mentioning a circumstance which, in one point of view, is greatly to your honour. At the same time, it may serve to remind you, that they who have resigned their preferments in that establishment, to which you owe your rise, have given a more unequivocal proof of their sincerity; and the publications by which they have defended their opinions, have displayed a depth of erudition, to which there is nothing that your lordship has hitherto favoured the public with, can make the least pretensions.

PHOTINUS.

WESTMINSTER, January 1, 1795.

